



MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN TASK FORCE

MEETING NOTES

SEPTEMBER 9, 2003

4:00 P.M.

ROOM 113

Task Force Members Present	Kit Boesch, Nye Bond, Susan Dunn, Duane Eitel, Margaret Hall, Elaine Hammer, Rick Krueger, Greg MacLean, Marian Malone, Tad McDowell, Eric Miller, Patte Newman, Gordon Scholz, Terry Werner. (Bill McCoy, Oscar Pohirieth absent)
Resource Panel Members Present	Mike Brienzo, Terry Genrich, Randy Hoskins, Doug Pillard, Ken Smith, Sandra Strickland, Larry Worth
Others Present	Brian Praeuner, Richard Schmeling, Alan Wickman, Duncan Ross, Kent Morgan, Michele Abendroth

Agenda Topics

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Morgan called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed those present.

2. Possible Distribution of Task Force Membership List with Detail

Mr. Morgan asked the Task Force if there was any opposition to distributing their phone numbers to the other Task Force members; no objections were voiced.

3. Public Comment Period (10 Min. Maximum)

Alan Wickman stated that there are a lot of quality of life reasons to support the trail system, and noted there are a lot of things that could be done to promote safe pedestrian transportation.

4. Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council (N-TRAC)

Mr. Morgan introduced Justin Fox of Wilbur Smith Associates of the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council (N-TRAC). Mr. Eitel informed the Task Force that N-TRAC was formed by the legislature approximately 4 years ago. There are 11 people representing nine agencies including the City of Lincoln, the City of Omaha, Burlington Northern, and Union Pacific. Recently, they went through a consultant selection process to conduct a transit study and selected Wilbur Smith as the consultant.

Mr. Fox stated that the purpose of the study is to look at public transit options statewide. They needed to identify travel patterns inside the corridors. The reason they are looking at transit is because they want to give people choices. There are four phases of the project: data gathering, analysis, setting a feasibility goal, and implementation.

Everything starts with ridership and the issue of where people live and work. The question is can you link those two. A big thrust in the study is whether or not they can do anything on rail. They determined three corridors for potential transit: Lincoln to Omaha, Fremont to Omaha, and Blair to Omaha.

One of the options they looked at was commuter rail between Lincoln and Omaha. They determined that there would be approximately 120,000-180,000 passenger trips per year. This number is “rock bottom” for a commuter rail service, but could be implemented. The Omaha to Fremont and Blair to Omaha corridors could not be implemented because the trips per year are too low.

They looked at what bus modal split rates might typically capture. They also looked at special events, such as UNL sporting events, which could add 9,000-10,000 riders per year.

Technologies for rail focused on the standard locomotive train, diesel multiple units (DMU), which is a self-propelled rail car, and a commuter or express bus. When talking about commuter rail, it is important to reiterate that this is rail that operates on the general rail system. It links downtown work centers with the fairly distant suburbs. Express bus is a standard suburban motor coach. They decided to move ahead with the DMU's.

In terms of cost for the DMU's, the big number is \$80 million, which includes maintenance facilities for the DMU's, the DMU's themselves, and the track improvements.

They developed 3 scenarios to determine how the alternatives would work: Scenario A has both rail and bus serving all 3 corridors. It includes commuter rail between Lincoln and Omaha, and express bus between Fremont and Omaha and Blair and Omaha. Scenario B has only bus, no rail, and serves all 3 corridors. Scenario C concentrates on bus between Lincoln and Omaha.

On the commuter rail, they anticipated a 45 minuted train frequency during the peak period with four trains. Operating costs for rail total \$5 million per year. Insurance is a big percentage of the operating costs. 16-22% of the operating costs is covered by rider fare. Over time, this number will improve.

Rail operating plan issues include operating agreements with Burlington Northern, institutional structure, and coordination with local transit service providers to get riders to their ultimate destination.

The express bus plan shows potential service in all 3 corridors. It would have more frequent service of every 30 minutes. Capital costs are a small fraction of what the rail costs are. Operating and maintenance costs are also small fraction of rail costs. Fare box recovery is also much higher than for rail.

They also looked at the environmental and social implications. They analyzed each of the scenarios in terms of land use, recreational impacts, noise impacts, and biological and

environmental justice. They then developed a matrix.

In terms of financial evaluation, scenario A has an aggregate of 18-23% fare box recovery rate. Scenarios B and C show that they will approach being able to cover their operating costs as they move forward.

Federal, state and local sources would have to be looked to in order to pay for these options. None of the options are self-sufficient. To evaluate the cost effectiveness of the options, they use a cost per new rider, which is new costs over annualized operating and capital costs. Scenario A has a cost per new rider of just over \$70, which is beyond what the FTA would like to see if they are going to provide money. Scenarios B and C have a very attractive cost per new rider.

It is important to look beyond the financial analysis. You have to consider the economic benefits of accidents cost savings, traveler cost savings, and congestion cost savings.

Mr. Fox concluded by stating that N-TRAC will now need to select a preferred alternative. To do so, they will look at the following: ease of implementation, ridership potential, financial performance, funding eligibility, and benefit vs. cost. Once they have the preferred alternative, they will identify all the things that are required for implementation.

Richard Schmeling, president of Pro-Rail Nebraska, which has a membership of 100 people throughout the state of Nebraska, spoke next. He stressed that if a bus option is selected, those busses will be subjected to the same congestion and weather problems as vehicles. Rail is an all-weather vehicle. The Task Force should remember the single, most-asked question is how to get to the rider's ultimate destination. That's where local transportation comes in to play. He hopes that the Task Force will look at linking the rail system with the local bus system.

5. Lincoln Area Trails Plan

Mike Brienzo, City Engineering Services, stated that the goal of the trails master plan was to develop the trails into a system so that you could get through town or across town without getting off the trail. In 1989, there were approximately 24 miles of existing trails. Currently, there are 98 miles of trails and future trails of 135 miles.

Terry Genrich, Parks and Recreation, stated that there is a urban system and rural system. He reviewed the current trails and future trails plan of the urban system. One of the goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a trail within one mile of every residence in Lincoln; he noted that we are fairly close to providing that. During the last Comp Plan, there was a public process to identify what to do with the urban trails when they reach the edge of the City. Strategies have been identified in the Comp Plan to accomplish this.

Funding for the trails is a big question. The Parks and Recreation Department has \$90,000 per year for trails construction. They have been able to enhance that money through the Department of Roads and the Games and Parks Commission. They also leverage their money through various local groups. The Great Plains Trails Network has been very helpful in raising money. Impact fees have also paid for future trails projects. One of the biggest issues is how to maintain the trails. They are trying to convert some of the money in the Capital Improvements Program budget towards maintenance. Mr. Genrich also mentioned several organizations in town that are

active supporters of the trails.

Elaine Hammer added that the largest funding source for trails is Public Works. She noted that the urban routes are typically used by commuters, and the rural trails are recreational. She also noted that it is important to find innovative ways to connect the urban trails.

Mr. Genrich pointed out the Natural Resources District is an important funding source also.

6. Other Business

No “other business” was discussed.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Morgan adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

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